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UNCLAS ROME 000008

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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR IO A/S HOLMES, A/S PRM DEWEY, IO/EDA BEHREND

USUN NEW YORK FOR AMBASSADOR NEGROPONTE AND LTAMLYN

NSC FOR JDWORKEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: US MISSION/ROME 2003 SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS - AS REQUESTED BY A/S IO HOLMES FOR THE IO/COM CONFERENCE JANUARY 8-9, 2004

REF:(A) 03 STATE 348057, (B) 03 ROME 4996, (C) 03 ROME 5106

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Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) Kim: Thanks for the opportunity to lay out our past year's accomplishments. In short, it was an extraordinary year where our Mission, like many other IO posts, found ourselves in the middle of some of the most difficult challenges on our country's foreign policy agenda. In 2003 US Mission/Rome worked with WFP in gearing up for and executing a 3 million ton food delivery program for Iraq that effectively averted widespread hunger despite serious logistical constraints. Overall, direct U.S. donations to WFP's worldwide relief efforts exceeded USD 1.2 billion, the largest single year U.S. Government donation to any UN Agency in the history of the UN. We engaged with FAO leadership/Rome in coordinating the complex purchases of massive quantities of fertilizers and agricultural supplies for Iraq. Fact finding visits were conducted in a number of troubled areas including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Cote d'Ivoire. We worked with Executive Board members and the WFP Secretariat to ensure passage (October 2003) of an allotment of up to USD 20 million from the organization's Equalization Account to cover one time costs for security upgrades in WFP's offices worldwide. Finally, in tandem with the untiring efforts of WFP Executive Director Jim Morris, we were able to secure sufficient international food aid (particularly a generous donation this year of 100,000 tons of U.S. P.L. 480 Title II assistance) to keep WFP relief efforts running this year in North Korea. End summary.

Background

[1](#)2. (SBU) Our vision over this past year has been to "put into action America's commitment to alleviate hunger and build hope." The US Mission pursues U.S. interests with the principal UN Agencies based in Rome and fosters relations with more than 150 permanent diplomatic representations from other countries. In particular, US Mission/Rome is at the forefront of recasting the humanitarian assistance and disaster response of multilateral organizations, leveraging the United States' status as the dominant humanitarian donor and ensuring that resources are deployed effectively in ways that advance U.S. policies.

[1](#)3. (U) In 2003, the United States donated over U.S. dollars (USD) 1.2 billion in relief and recovery assistance through the World Food Program (the largest single year U.S. Government donation to any UN Agency in the history of the UN) and over USD 10 million in voluntary, extra-budgetary support through the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) for emergency seeds and tools. We worked with these entities and their UN sister organizations on a daily basis to ensure the proper stewardship of U.S. resources provided to benefit vulnerable populations affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies worldwide.

The exemplary Iraq humanitarian response through WFP and FAO

[1](#)4. (SBU) For months before the U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq, we worked with WFP in gearing up for a massive food distribution program to avert famine in the event of war. As the war got closer, food was warehoused around the region, humanitarian corridors were mapped out, and contracts were drafted with shipping and trucking companies throughout the region. This planning paid off: to date WFP has successfully moved some 3 million tons of food into Iraq, effectively stabilizing the food situation. We worked hard to convince

both WFP and FAO to take on prime responsibility for the purchase of around 1.5 million tons of local Iraqi wheat and barley production. We also engaged with FAO leadership in coordinating the complex purchases of massive quantities of fertilizers and agricultural supplies for Iraq, with funding from the Oil-for-Food (OFF) Program. Note: US Mission had a representative posted in the Iraq theatre for 100 days. End note.

Advocacy for upgraded security for humanitarian workers

15. (SBU) All of us deeply mourned the tragic loss of the lives of 23 of our UN humanitarian colleagues, victims of the August 19 cowardly terrorist attack on the United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad. At the WFP October 2003 Executive Board session (reported ref B), we worked with Board members and the WFP Secretariat to ensure passage of an allotment of up to USD 20 million from the organization's Equalization Account to cover one time costs for security upgrades in WFP's offices worldwide. And we followed up with a meeting on November 7, 2003 at U.S. Embassy Rome, at which our Regional Security Officer's team and WFP security chiefs, reviewed WFP's planned worldwide security measures and recommendations resulting from a comprehensive risk assessment of its Rome installation using an independent consultant. Note. For starters, reinforced barriers are presently being installed at WFP Headquarters and all windows have been duly treated with mylar. End note.

16. (U) The UN Security Office, UNSECOORD, which forms a key part of the operation, has concluded (ref C) that the present UN humanitarian field security management system requires "significant and urgent enhancement." I want to point out that WFP has lost 56 staffers -- killed in the line of duty -- over the past decade. I strongly support the position of then WFP Executive Director Catherine Bertini in her appearance before the UN Security Council in early February, 2000, which drew world attention to the issue that "host countries must be responsible for the security of humanitarian workers and must act to punish the perpetrators of crimes against humanitarian workers." We stand ready to assist WFP wherever appropriate in expanding and refining training related to security awareness and practices of WFP staff, their families and NGO partners.

Fact Finding Visits to troubled areas

17. (U) In 2003, I visited the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Albania in my attempt to fulfill the President's mandate and draw attention to problems of hunger and communicate and demonstrate America's compassion for people in need. My staff visited other troubled spots including Iraq, Mauritania, Zambia, Cote d'Ivoire, Georgia, northern Uganda, Nepal, southern Bangladesh (which focused attention on the forced repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Burma), and more. One lesson that has been frequently reinforced in these visits, which we are keen to communicate to both traditional and emerging donors, is the value of food aid.

18. (SBU) Our food leverages so much more in accomplishing broader goals. I have seen it used to prevent human trafficking, reforest mountains, assist farmers with irrigation projects, and provide parents with an incentive to ensure that their children get an education. It is clear to see the benefit of school feeding programs around the world, but especially on the front lines of the war on terrorism. As one Pakistani teacher stated about the training of terrorists, "It's poverty and hunger that drive these students to the madrasahs. If their stomachs weren't empty, they wouldn't come."

Advocate for North Korea's hungry poor women and children

19. (SBU) Finally, in tandem with the untiring efforts of WFP Executive Director Jim Morris, we were able to secure sufficient international food aid (particularly a generous donation this year of 100,000 tons of U.S. P.L. 480 Title II assistance) to keep WFP relief efforts on track this year in North Korea. Let me emphasize that neither WFP nor we are satisfied with the monitoring and access situation for food aid programs in DPR Korea. We bear no illusions with the constraints of dealing with the hideous regime still in place there. But while we continue to make progress toward our goal of reaching international accountability standards for our food donations, we are also saving the lives of the most vulnerable. We know there are millions of hungry,

needy North Korean women and children.

110. (SBU) Having visited North Korea six times since 1996, I can attest that WFP food assistance is reaching many of them, and is making a difference. And let me assure you that achieving further progress on monitoring and access will remain a top priority for me and my staff in our continuing dialogue with WFP leadership and concerned donors.

Comment

111. (U) I can tell you that our small U.S. Mission/Rome is a diamond in the rough. We are polishing it and I am convinced that it is swiftly becoming one of the "jewels in the crown" of the State Department. And thank you for all the support you in IO gave us in 2003, and we look forward to doing even more for the hungry in 2004. Tony. Hall

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2004ROME00008 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED